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STATINTL

Business as Usual

By William F. Buckley Jr.



SEN. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT, trying to make the point that private individuals and agencies sometimes get in the way of "official" foreign policy, has classified the Young Americans for Freedom as an "extremist political organization."

The Senator's complaint concerns the cancellation by the Firestone Tire Co. of the deal with Romania to build there a synthetic rubber plant worth about \$40 million. The Young Americans for Freedom acted on the assumption that surely if it is laudable to picket Woolworth's in Alabama for declining to serve hot dogs to human beings merely because they are Negro, it is laudable to picket commerce with a government that declines to let human beings out of jail and torture chambers merely because they believe in freedom.

Anyway, the pressure of Y.A.F. combined with opportunistic pressures by Firestone's competitor, the Goodyear Company, caused Firestone last spring to back out of the deal. Romania and Sen. Fulbright are furious.

Sen. Fulbright's larger point—that individual agencies shouldn't get in the way of American foreign policy—is not uninteresting, altho it tends surely to reflect the latently totalitarian instincts of those who denounce in such immoderate language others who disagree with them.

Until the day comes when the Government of the United States owns all the corporations in America, it is the corporations' business, not the Government's, whether to trade with any other nation in the world.

True, as a matter of national policy the Government may clap an embargo: that is an exercise of a negative power relating to the national security. But to do the opposite, to require a corporation to trade with a foreign power, whether that power is friendly or unfriendly, is outside the sovereign authority of free governments. The Government may deny an export license to anyone who desires to ship a cyclotron to Cuba. But the

Government may not require a corporation to ship a single stick of chewing gum to Cuba against its will.

The Young Americans for Freedom was organized in 1960 as more or less the conservative counterpart to the Students for Democratic Action. The group has been governed by a succession of young men and women who have steadfastly eschewed extremism and extremists of any sort.

Their publication, *The New Guard* — "something called *The New Guard*," was how Sen. Fulbright described the journal that attacked the impending deal with Romania — is carefully edited and highly responsible. It publishes the work of many students and scholars from around the country. Dozens upon dozens of Congressmen and Senators and professors are associated with its advisory board. All in all, it is about as "extremist" an organization as the Chamber of Commerce. Partisan yes, extremist no.

It is a continuing source of exasperation to some of our Florentine internationalists that there should continue to reside deep in the American conscience a sense of the moral unfitness of normal commercial and even diplomatic exchanges with governments which flout the elementary laws of civilization, and on top of that, seek to turn every exchange with the West into a means by which to increase their relative power over us, advancing, hopefully, on the day when they will, in the delicate phrase of Khrushchev, "bury us."

For Sen. Fulbright these are sentiments to be mocked:

Goodyear, he wrote, anticipating Firestone's difficulties, "suddenly got religion and grandly refused to traffic with the Red heathen." I do not know, not being Goodyear's confessor, just how suddenly it got religion. But is the term "Red heathen" only suitable for use by the College of the Ozarks?

Sen. Fulbright's derisory dismissal of such impulses goes over very well with the long-hairs who sit around the fellows' suites in our posher universities, wondering which of the two hegemonies, the Russian's or our own, is the less unbearable. But it doesn't go over very well, thank God, in most other parts of the United States.